

SMOKE

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SMOKE



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The Mirror of Venus

For Richardson King Wood

In the dead night we walk behind a hearse
zigzagging towards a dream-built colonnade;
knee-deep, through waves of faded petals wade
from thornless flowers to thorns. Hear us converse:
"Whom do we mourn?" You ask me, half afraid.
"I mourn for you, and whom I mourn I curse."
And though I know my answer is perverse,
I do not know who the one was who prayed.

With dawn comes knowledge. The priest hid in the fane
withered the blossomed, votive sprays we brought
and swept them out into the empty court.
By scorn in love, by charity in disdain
our fragmentary fealties attain
foreknowledge of the vacancy he sought.

JOHN WHEELWRIGHT

S M O K E

Week End Bid

For James Agee

Where a fallen farmhouse leaves a scar
on the pasture, with a bed of pansies
with blackberries, black as caviar
and Queen Anne's lace, and the coarser tansies
(grown in the centuries gone by
to keep away the dread swamp fevers)
with heights below me, and the height on high
of Quaker Hill of the True Believers,—

I plow the grasses, and tread the thistles
expectantly wondering where you are,
and why you send postcards for my epistles;
I turn, wherever a meadow bird whistles,
to see you coming, and hear your cry.

I rise in the morning and close my shutter
to sleep, while the Sun swings from East to West;
and at night, when my lamps burn low and sputter
put my head to bed to give it a rest.
Come here and talk to me. My muse and your muse
will walk the pasture while we sleep
that while we are waking, your views and my views
may grow more common sense and deep
(while distant milk trains clang to the city)
in almost every word we utter;
and if not deeper, perhaps more witty.
Come. If you don't, it will be a pity.
Come if you can. You can, if you choose.

JOHN WHEELWRIGHT

Deborah, Believing in God

Between the darkness and the doubt
glow seraphim to scorch fear out,

to hold assurance to the eyes
that inhibition sanctifies.

What chastity denies at most
is recompensed in the Holy Ghost,

for flesh that keeps a lonely bed
the saints will hallow among the dead.

And sodden hair and mottled skin
comprise a barrier to sin

on which the nacre gates will squeak
enclosing triumph for the meek

henceforth, as if an aureole
were not a solace slightly droll
for guarding what life never stole.

ISRAEL SMITH

S M O K E

Quetzalcoatl

when the gods deceive no more

The Golden Age has ridden into the transparent and beautiful-seeming water
of our times,
its golden men are ravenous for gold.

Thorhall, a blasphemous man, was tossed over by
the Irish Coast,
swearing at a storm he foresaw,
spurning a slave's cracked skull with billow-forced
gesture of his angry foot.

Columbus is dead of an ague,
muttering at his discovery, praying for his old
world's sight of the New World,
and for the old world's glory.

Magellan, who bound one thin girdle
around earth's fruitful waist,
died of small poison.

Let Cortez murder more, amid red or yellow flares
by the lake,
while Pizarro flecks treasures and ornaments with
color and taint of the original ore—

Men shall be crucified for mercy, but not with too precious nails;
rip out of their breasts the golden prongs which divide, in secret, hearts:

loyalties of truth and confusion,
ringing bells of voices
carried by desolating winds after fleeting causes,
the fate of passion,
life and death meeting in one abstinence
from lesser comfort,
to get at one desire.

Hollow out the bases of the temple and the fortification
to store metal: maize is congealed; white wine runs cold in the prisons of the
hard bars

S M O K E

"shoot a silver bullet into the hearts of stars
and you won't see any difference;
Zapata rides on the black night,
wrapped in a black cloak,
undistinguished from death,
shooting it out with tyrants."

"I say I let the bullet plough my brains out
while the world was falling under me;
I fell to the ground,
and descended with it."

"They swing this planet from upper heavens
on ticker tape. I have found hate,
but tossing to and fro
has not yet jogged off my close-clinging
revulsion."

"Bury the dead, and the rocks.
Look to the red, unweakened sun!"

"Oh, I have locked my dreams away—
down there. Their guardian,
Civilization, sits on them."

The Golden Age stops before the line of the beach's roar,
checked on its wide pinions; these sails are furled,
the banners toss above the threat of spray;—
another noise,
the first round shot plunges through native houses.

FRANK MERCHANT

S M O K E

Urania

Let others chart the stars,
Those glimmering foamy reefs
Breaking across dark seas
That fire-lit planets sail.

I knew a dreamer's son
Who gave his life to weigh
And measure double-stars,
Linked fires, a thousand odd.

Now he is fire-dust too,
Whirled in a planet's rim,
Balanced in tides of space
Flowing between the worlds.

Let others weigh the dust,
Spread nets to catch the suns.
Guide me through star-cast shadow
Where all fires cool and die.

GRANT H. CODE

S M O K E

S. V. M. Considers Her Forbears

Come, climb with me the family tree
And we shall see what we shall see,

And we shall travel distant lands
And feel the touch of buried hands,

And know the dead cannot forget
The places they loved (but inhabit them yet,)

So put aside your fountain pen,
And let's consider time again.

For Kent is a pleasant place to know,
And it's hard to forsake it, and hard to go
To the rocks of New Hampshire and her snow,

And Ireland's hills are high and green,
And Ireland's hunting is hard and keen,

But Sir Robert, the Irishman, and his daughter
Leave it, and voyage across the water,

And the Scotch mist rolls upon the heather
Where the Earl and the peasant girl sleep together,

And the Manigault's doublets are covered with blood
Where the Catholic fought, and the Huguenot stood,

And Quaker Massey and Quaker Lea
Journey with Penn across the sea
To the town that they planted so pleasantly.

Middleton, Manigault, Butler, and Mease,
Valentine, Robeson, in differing ways,

S M O K E

Simple or lordly, plain people or great,
Some of them humble, some brought up in state,

Some of them worthy, (and some little worth)
Some very wealthy, some close to the earth,

Some very foolish, and some merely sad,
Many born rulers, and more slightly mad,

Scraping and paring, and giving and spending,
Taking, or borrowing, bargaining or lending,

On foot or ahorseback, my forbears fared forth
To love in the southland and live in the north.

They painted, and musicked, raced horses, and danced,
Dug potatoes and turnips whenever it chanced

That their lot fell to turnips instead of to painting,
And their ladies' to childbearing rather than fainting.

They were vain, they were arrogant, gifted, and gay,
Grateful, and reckless, and tender as day

When she turns in the arms of the twilight, and some
Saw God in His Splendour before they drew home.

They have built up a nation. That strange blood is mine.
Blood that is mingled of homespun and fine,

Blood that is made out of cotton and silk,
Mixed in a barrel, of wine and of milk,

Discord and harmony blended in one,
The coast of New England with Caroline's sun,

The long snows of Portsmouth, and Charleston's long heat,
And the Delaware, lapping the small, sober street

S M O K E

Where the blood ran demurely (as far as we know)
And behaviour was seemly with friend or with foe.

The blood melted and mingled, got twisted and tainted,
It flowed like an ocean that nobody wanted,

It shone like a fountain that climbs to the light,
It fought like a vixen midway her last fight,

It was fused, in a fusion of flame and of cold,
It was ground in a mortar, of iron and gold,

The ink dripped from the sword, and the blood from the pen!
Such were my forbears. Farewell and Amen.

SUSANNA VALENTINE MITCHELL

Indubitable Venus

After each debauchery
flesh that I serve and foster
sinks crippled on one knee
and prays a godly wraith
to resurrect and bolster
the blind urge of faith.

A snowman is more nothingness than snow,
passion once shaped should be imagined dead.
Let then my body, grovelling, believe
the soft-earned discipline of self-deceit
is the one mastery it may achieve.
I that would judge, more than my body, know
(as a cold hope is desperate to entreat)
a cold lust is a dreadful thing to bed.

I who can doubt
and doubting earn my keep,
who can rejoicing weather out
the irony of intellectual storm
and stilled desire,
doubt not my dreaming loins require
(indubitable Venus on each night's tide of sleep)
bravado of feeling warm.

R. P. BLACKMUR

S M O K E

Moonlight Filter

A pewter effigy of Christ,
Enniched in the nunnery chamber
Where Sister Allegra lay, enticed
From her wide-openly loving
Eyes such devoted whispering
As to draw from Christ an answer.
The chastest words were filtered away
In moon-ray.
All she could hear
Was, your eyes are beautifully clear
 your cheeks are beautifully pale
 your lips are also pale . . . pale . . .

KERKER QUINN

Grey Sabbath

These afternoons there are meek mouths
speaking of dead places, and the fruits
above them swell into their darkening prophecies.
Then so long the swan—great black water—
and now the geese drift where
the tightening valleys burn
and soils are loud with mountain men
browned to their stout sobrieties.

See, companions of the little fences,
the tapir-walk of maples
and the curdled moon; soon
we shall pounce our feet undaunted
on the porches of our ceaseless home,
and cup the ears to Chorazim—
gone bleaching—to the holy feet
and shoulders most inhospitable.

Holy, bitter, right, the scoured steeples
spindle God's most righteous firmament,
a document wherein the hand
wrote and having written spread
the dour robes for holy measured merriment—
when six days to the corn, six to the swine,
leave bellies somnolent unto
the word made flesh that dwelled among us.

Once lost—once white—I found the cattle broad
in water places; there was a song, and rabbits
went, and there he washed the yellowed feet
of slatterns, and a toothless woman said:
Some day the orange and the pear shall fill my lap,
when old men put the shutters on the broken
windows of their lusting, and then perhaps I'll dare
to turn the page and read that all who spat upon me
shout fleshless underneath the palms in golden streets.

DAVID C. DEJONG

S M O K E

To Morning

The serpents of the sun, the golden hair,
Hissing light down across the blackened world,
Descending shattered pavements of night-air,
Now shine their skins upon the housetops curled.
O Windows of the Flesh, fly up to morning!
Reveal the eyes of those behind the wall!
Lean toward the falling light, the proud bones turning
Palms to heaven where the wild fangs call.
Invisioned, horrific with their clean, hot fire,
The darting heads, serpents of shining gold,
(Deep leaves upon the tree in spring's green birth)
Assail the body with barbaric roar,
While those within the walls, their small hearts cold,
Blaze up their voices with the waking earth!

WILLARD MAAS

S M O K E

Elegiacs

The wise apple is dead,
Its red excess
Is brown and creased
Under the crystal bones of the flakes,
Filagree fronds from a cold sea.

Here is a stairway into purity;
Here is the barest ration.
And the ultimate end of too much ripeness
Is an enduring scintillation,
Dry divinity, a white dead sea.

Hora novissima, tempora pessima
Sunt how the trees stretch
Upward . . . Ah love . . . the apple
A real world shrivelled!

Lightly as air in the mind of God
The snow lies in the orchard.

H. R. HAYS

RICHARD BLACKMUR

Indubitable Venus

is already well known as a poet and critic, although he has not yet published a volume.

GRANT CODE

Urania

lives in Washington, D. C. He has published a play and printed privately two pamphlets of his poems.

DAVID C. DEJONG

Grey Sabbath

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Quetzalcoat

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Week End Bid
The Mirror of Venus

of Boston, was included in *Eight More Harvard Poets*, 1923, and has contributed poems and prose to various periodicals. His first book of poetry, *Rock and Shell*, is in press.

